

Tales of Captain Bill Barnes



by William E. Barnes

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Cover Photos

Bill in 1990 at Clear Lake, California.

1974 picture of Buchanan 28'.

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*Captain Bill Barnes (left)
with his brother, Bob..*



Tales of Captain Bill Barnes

1917-1926

William E. Barnes was born on February 22, 1917 in Kansas City, Missouri, at 1 a.m. One year later his parents moved to Seattle, Washington, where his father, a brass moulder, helped make propellers for the battleships.

The first event in his childhood was a painful experience—his mother had to temporarily put her two sons in a children's home. Mother promised to return in a month and take them home. It

was a very sad moment—being hugged and kissed, and then watching her walk away.

After eating, it seemed, a hundred bowls of oatmeal mush morning and night, the boys saw their mother return. She gathered up her two sons, as promised, and they happily went to a new home near Point Defiance Park in Tacoma, later moving to Vashon Island.

*Bill's mother at
approximate
age eleven.*



Tales of Captain Bill Barnes

Puget Sound Saga.

On the early morning of November 10, 1923, menacing gray clouds, the forewarning of a Northwester' from Alaska, were moving into the Puget Sound

However, the omen of bad weather did not deter Captain Wm. Ewing Barnes, who for the past four months had refurbished his small, four-foot long, two-foot beam, double-ended, orange crate sailing boat, making preparations for sailing. At long last the time had arrived for realizing his dream of a marine adventure.

Captain Barnes boarded his boat, made last minute checks of standing and running rigging and sails, and awaited the high tide, at which time he would set sail.

"Belay there," Captain Barnes shouted, "What is this?!"

Water was flooding the bilge covering his boots, then rising to his knees. To an old sea dog water in the the bilge was of little concern. Bail it out and carry on with task of getting underway.

From high on the shore came a shrieking sound like the wind, indicating the arrival of the Alaska storm. But no, the sound was the voice of Captain Barnes' Mother, who came dashing down the beach screaming to save her son's life.

So, through the eyes of a child, the undertaking of a sailing adventure was made without the thought of any danger or its consequences.

God Bless Mother.

Captain William Barnes was six years old.

*Bill's mother in
her early teens.*



Tales of Captain Bill Barnes

First Love

The saga of Capt. Bill continues after his disastrous escape of attempting to go to sea in an orange crate sailing ship, via the Puget Sound. Thanks to the alertness and action of his devoted Mother, his life was saved.

In 1925 Capt. Bill's family moved to the small town of Pacific City, located fifteen miles from Tacoma. It was there that he met and made a friend of a delightful pretty little girl with blond hair and blue eyes, named Winifred.

On a warm spring day, with birds singing and butterflies darting here and there, old Capt. Bill, excited about having his first date, took Winifred's dainty little hand in his and strolled down a winding path until they reached a grassy knoll bordering a small stream. This

was a secluded spot that Capt. Bill had frequented many times. They sat together still holding hands. As time quickly past, whatever words were spoken are now lost and forever forgotten. However, the feelings expressed in their eyes, the touching and holding each other for only those brief moments will be long remembered.

The brief time together in that serene setting with little Winifred so long ago, was the most euphoric feeling ever experienced by Old Capt. Bill and still lingers in his heart and memory.

Did lovely little Winifred remember too? Old Capt. Bill sincerely hopes so.

Capt. Bill was eight years old.

Tales of Captain Bill Barnes

Jailhouse Blues

Captain Bill continues his life story after his beautiful experience in Love Story. In 1926, still living in Pacific City, he and his friend Roy decided to venture into the General Store to sample some candy. After making their selection, and without paying, they leisurely wandered out of the store and down to the Green River, where they sat together on the bank to savor their stolen sweets. It was great fun for awhile . . . until the world started spinning and both suddenly became ill. They weakly said their good-byes and went their separate ways. Old Captain Bill headed for home, staggering and stopping often to throw up.

“What is wrong with you?” “Where have you been?” “What have you been up to?” Mother asked. Now it was confession time. Showing her a sample of the candy, she suddenly gasped: “This is a tobacco not candy!”

After two days of suffering and finally recovering, Mother Barnes marched her wayward son back to the General Store to face the owner, confess to the thievery, and pay for the stolen tobacco.

On the return home, Mother Barnes made a detour past the local jail. What a masterpiece of construction! It was a concrete fort with walls two feet thick, and in the windows were bars three inches in diameter. With his head down and the thoughts of going to jail forever, his Mother said: “No jail this time, but if you ever steal again, this is where you will spend the rest of your life!” End of story.

Captain William E. Barnes was nine years old.

Tales of Captain Bill Barnes

Watermelon Harvest

Old Captain Bill with his friend Steadman decided to go watermelon hunting. It was a hot day and, having some watermelon seemed like a worthwhile project. So with a pocket knife in hand, they crawled into and through a large field with lush green, two-foot high plants, looking for a victim. Finding one, they stabbed and hacked away on a large specimen, trying to cut it open . . . without results. They attacked another, smaller one . . . with a few choice words to aid the cause, but failed again. Finally, exhausted and defeated, they crawled from the field deciding that the watermelons were not ripe and that they would return later in the summer for another try.

Returning home, Dear Mother once again saved the day by, of all things, serving watermelon.

Captain Bill, using his brilliant mind, concluded that you do not attack a monster Hubbard Squash with a little pocket knife but next time, use an axe or make sure that it is a watermelon. Captain Bill was nine years old.

There were many other enjoyable times while living in Pacific City: remembering dad fishing for salmon in the Green River, hiking with my brother George through the woods, helping Mother plant vegetable seeds in the garden. There was joy in observing the birds, especially the robins and their young, nesting in the old apple tree.

The Family.



Left to right: Bill, Bob, Father, Sister, Mother, George.

Tales of Captain Bill Barnes

1927 - 1933

In early 1927, Mother Barnes received from a letter from Dad that he was working for the Standard Brass Co. and to gather up the children and come to Oakland, California. Two weeks later Mother purchased train tickets to Oakland, and we departed a day later. When the train arrived in Oakland, *Oregon*, the conductor told Mother this was her stop. Well, the battle was on. Mother refused to move, showing the conductor her tickets for Oakland, California. Whatever the error, the next day we arrived in Oakland, California and were greeted by Dad.

Dad had rented an apartment on West Seventh Street in West Oakland close to downtown. The nearest school was in the Catholic Church complex across the street. Captain Bill remembered the Sisters' being kind, gentle, and loving, but strict in their teaching. There was one little episode that occurred in class that Captain Bill would never forget. He made some remark to a girl classmate who, in turn, told the Sister, and that caused Captain Bill to be promptly marched into the restroom and have his mouth washed out with some soap. Other than that, he enjoyed the schooling and came to deeply respect the Catholic Sisters.

The next six years were filled with memories of moving and attending many different schools. There was Lincoln near Chinatown, McKlymonds, Oakland, and Roosevelt High Schools. The building of the Highland Hospital on East Fourteenth Avenue was an event that lasted for several years.

These were the years of The Great Depression: banks closing, unemployment, shortage of money, and a struggle for survival, particularly for dear Mother who had to care and provide for her three boys since Dad's desertion in 1931, when he returned to his first family in Lansing, Michigan. But she managed to hold everything together with the few dollars earned from renting rooms nightly and by the week from her sixteen-room hotel in downtown Oakland.

One Christmas she saved enough to buy a new bicycle for her three boys to share. There was five cents for admission to the movie to see Rudolf Valentino in the *Sheik*; nineteen cents for a quart of ice cream, which was a real treat.

Captain Bill witnessed dear Mother crying many times, tears flowing without a word. Regardless of all the hardship, her love for her three boys made us believe that times would get better.

Mother and sister, Beulah.



Tales of Captain Bill Barnes

1934 - 1936

In the fall of 1934, Captain Bill's family moved to Phillipsville, Humboldt County, California, where the family leased a 160 acre ranch bordering along the South Fork of the Eel River and off Highway 101 next to the Franklin K-lane Redwood Grove. It was a paradise compared to the city life in Oakland, California. The depression was still a part of life but seemed more remote here in the country.

The Christmas of 1934 was difficult: There was not any electricity, which required using candles for lights and a wood burning stove for cooking. However, the family pulled together with a pioneering spirit and planned ahead for and looked forward to the spring planting season.

In January 1935, Captain Bill and brothers Bob and Jack attended South Fork Union High School in Miranda, three miles from the ranch. It was a small school with about 100 students. Other than school, all the time was devoted to helping on the ranch. There was the trellising the quarter acre of raspberries, loganberries, and blackberries. Later in the summer, picking and boxing the berries, helping with the apples—Opalescent, Spitzenbergs, Jonathans, Red Delicious and Pippins—the daily chore of feeding the hogs, and milking the cows. The fruit and vegetables were sold to local customers who were employed by lumber mills.

At school, Captain Bill joined Future Farmers of America and became interested in Animal Husbandry and excelled in the study of feeds and the feedings of livestock. His agriculture instructor, Bert Jones, suggested that if possible, Captain Bill should continue his education at the University of California at Davis.

Finally, after a career of two seasons of playing basketball for old SFUHS, a team without any substitutes, Captain Bill exhausted himself running up and down the court for a team that never won a game in the league. But he did win the heart and admiration of one lovely Charmion Neal. Later they performed a duet together in the school operetta, singing Leiberstraum.

In January 1936, Captain Bills family returned to Oakland and he moved to Garberville and worked milking cows at the Yearly Dairy until graduating on June 6. Saying goodbye to Charmion, who would graduate the following year, he returned to Oakland promising Charmion that he would visit her when she graduated in 1937.

After returning to Oakland, finding work was urgent but not easy. Scanning the ads, a job was available for a laborer, so Old Captain Bill answered promptly and met the new employer the following morning as planned. He arrived in an old flatbed truck and then drove to a dairy twenty miles to somewhere near Benica.

Eager to earn a few dollars, shoveling a load of cow manure was not the worst job in the world. The employer, after returning to Oakland, said to meet him the next morning at the same place. Well, you know what! He did not show up as promised. So Old Captain Bill did not get paid but did get a lot of exercise and learned how to load cow manure for free.

About a month after the manure adventure, the State of California announced an examination for laborers to be held in Hayward, fourteen miles from Oakland, at the Division of Highways Maintenance Station. On the examination day, Captain Bill arrived at the stated time along with about 100 other applicants. The exam was a test of physical ability only; no written or oral test was required. The state wanted laborers with strength and no brains.

Captain Bill felt discouragement and felt like returning home, but having come the fourteen miles, decided to compete anyway. So, along

with the other brainless gorillas, when his turn came, he lifted his one-hundred pound sack of sand and carried it the twenty yards, then placed it on an overhead platform.

Three weeks later, Captain Bill received the results of the test and was surprised that he made number eleven on the list. A week later, he was notified to report to the Home for the Blind in Oakland. He worked washing pots and pans and the walls in the patients' rooms and raising vegetables for the home. The job lasted three months. The next call was working at the San Francisco Oakland Bay Bridge Toll Station for three weeks when he received a permanent appointment with the Division of Highways at Livermore as a highway maintenance man. The work was varied. Patching and sealing Highway 50 from Dublin over the Altamont Pass to San Juaquin County line and painting guardrails, clearing the highway of mudslides in winter, etc. This job lasted for two years from 1937 to 1939.



First girlfriend.

Tales of Captain Bill Barnes

Blind Date

The saga of Captain Bill continues . . . On the way to Livermore on a Greyhound bus from Oakland, Captain Bill met and chatted with a young lady passenger, Alice Richardson, who was traveling to Los Angeles to visit friends. She lived on a large sheep ranch at Stewarts Point, 125 miles north of San Francisco on Highway 1, on the coast in Mendicino County. They talked about sheep ranching and animal husbandry in general. Before arriving in Livermore, Miss Richardson invited Captain Bill to drive to her ranch and visit sometime.

About three months later, on a Saturday, Captain Bill drove the one hundred miles up the coast to the Richardson ranch. The drive was slow and hazardous, and Captain Bill arrived late in the evening because of the dense fog on the coast. Seeing Miss Richardson again and meeting her family was pleasant, as was their hospitality .

The next day, Sunday, relatives of the Richardson family, Mr. and Mrs. Palmer, along with their son, Richard, arrived from Los Angeles. In talking with Richard, Captain Bill learned that he was attending U. C. Davis for the 1939 spring semester, as was Captain Bill. They agreed to meet there in the spring.

They began the semester and roomed together for two years. Richard returned to UCLA, completing his degree in Horticulture.

Captain Bill graduated and became an official milk tester for the Dairy Breed Associations, which required traveling throughout California.

In the summer of 1941, while testing cows at Adohr Farms, a large dairy in southern California, he contacted his friend for a visit. Richard arranged a date with his girlfriend and asked her to bring her roommate for Captain Bill. The next evening, they drove to San Fernando to pick up Captain Bill's date. Her name was Edwina Chase, tall with brown hair and a very beautiful smile. They drove to Hollywood, had dinner and enjoyed a cinema. Captain Bill made a date with Edwina for Sunday, and they spent the day hiking, taking photos, and enjoying the view from the mountains overlooking the San Fernando Valley.

This was their last date, but they corresponded occasionally during 1942. Captain Bill enlisted in November 1942 and was later stationed in Puerto Rico for the next three years. They wrote every day, a total of 2000 letters. Through the letters, they shared their hopes and dreams and became to know each other. On a furlough in 1944, they became engaged and on March 28, 1945, Captain Bill and Edwina were married. After 45 years together and three lovely daughters, Edwina made her final journey on June 2, 1990.

It seems that it was destined by the powers above that they should meet. If any of the following events had not occurred, they would not have met: The first event was in 1936 when Captain Bill's agriculture instructor advised him to go to U. C. Davis if possible. The second was working in Livermore and meeting Miss

Richardson on the bus and then visiting her at the ranch on that particular weekend that Dick Palmer arrived. And after college, visiting Richard and his arranging the dates with his girl and her roommate, Edwina, who became Old Captain Bill's wife.



Tales of Captain Bill Barnes

1939 - 1941

In 1939, Captain Bill took a leave of absence from the Division of Highways to attend U. C. Davis to take courses in Animal Husbandry. He graduated in 1941. Then Captain Bill was hired by the university as an official milk test supervisor for the Dairy Breed Associations. This required the use of the Babcock Test for determining the percentage of butterfat produced by the cows on test and traveling throughout California.

*Bill and Edwina,
about 1974.*



Tales of Captain Bill Barnes

1942 - 1945

In November 1941, Captain Bill went to San Francisco and enlisted in the U. S. Air Force Transport Command and was sent to Hamilton Field for his eight weeks of basic training. From there, he was assigned to training as an aircraft maintenance mechanic at the Embrey-Riddle School of Aviation in Coral Gables, Florida. After three months, he was sent to Buffalo, New York for a month of specialized training on the C-46 cargo plane at Curtiss Wright.

In April 1943, he went to Boca Raton and then to the 36th Street Airfield and on to permanent assignment at Borenquin Field near Aquadilla, Puerto Rico. During the two years spent at this base, Captain Bill was working on the steady arrival each day of 100 to 150 planes. During the night the engines were checked, the planes were refueled and readied for their next hop to Trinidad. Then they went to Belem, Ascension Island; Casablanca, Morocco; or Karachi, India. The planes were loaded with personnel and

supplies of every kind used to fight a war. Captain Bill was sent to the School of Applied Tactics in Orlando, Florida for thirty days for specialized training in war tactics. He was given a furlough after completion of the training and went to San Fernando, California. Here he became engaged to Edwina Chase. On a March 28, 1945 furlough, Captain Bill and Edwina were married.

After the war was over, Captain Bill returned to U. C. Davis to complete the animal science courses. In early 1947, Captain Bill was hired as a dairy herdsman for Alameda County Farm in San Leandro and three years later he was made Farm Manager overseeing the operation of supplying milk, eggs, and meat. Supervision of eight employees, care of 100 milk cows, 4000 laying hens, and 200 head of hogs. Also doing the purchasing and preparing the annual budget until 1953 when the farm operation was closed.

